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Treating Victims of the Conflict with Respect and Dignity: Guidelines for Journalists on Interviewing Victims and Survivors of Conflict (Essential Tips)

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Treating Victims of the Conflict
with Respect and Dignity:

Guidelines for
**Journalists on
Interviewing
Victims and
Survivors of
Conflict**



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Arts & Humanities
Research Council



The Commission for
Victims & Survivors

The Essentials

1. Remember the NUJ code of conduct: A journalist “does nothing to intrude into anybody’s private life, grief or distress unless justified by overriding consideration of the public interest.” These interviews take skill and empathy. Be respectful in all cases regardless of your own views on the conflict.
2. Do your research so you know the background and be sensitive to contested narratives and language. Talk with victim’s and survivor’s groups and keep up to date with developments on related issues.
3. Avoid ‘cold-calling’ when possible – try to use a go-between known to the person. Remember that your request will evoke powerful and painful emotions, which may include anger. Don’t harass – take no for an answer.
4. Be honest and clear about what you are doing. Identify yourself and provide a card. Let the person know if you will be contacting other people, particularly if this includes people connected with perpetrators. Ask them if there is anyone else they think you should contact.
5. Make sure the person knows you will have to check the facts. Go back over the interview with them. Ask them if there is anything else you should know. Check if there have been relevant legal cases linked to the issues being discussed or if any are pending. Don’t make promises you can’t keep.
6. Include women’s voices.
7. Take care of yourself – this work can be harrowing. Seek support if you feel overwhelmed.

